

From the preceding table it will be seen that the proportion to population of prisoners in gaol has fallen considerably during the last five years, while, if the comparison be carried farther back, the position is seen to be still more favourable, the prisoners in gaol in the Commonwealth numbering as much as 16 per 10,000 of the population in 1891.

**2. Improvement of Penological Methods.**—During recent years Australia, in common with most other civilised countries, has introduced considerable modifications and improvements in methods of prison management. Under the old régime punishment partook more or less of the character of reprisal for wrongdoing, and the idea of constituting the prison as a reformative agency was in the background. But of recent years there has been an earnest attempt at effecting a moral reformation in the unfortunates who lapse into crime. This aspect of prison management has been specially prominent in New South Wales. As pointed out by the Comptroller-General of Prisons of that State, there are, however, certain directions in which improvements can be made. The danger and absurdity of sending drunkards to gaol has already been alluded to in a previous section, while present methods of dealing with vagrancy, and particularly with prostitution, have proved quite inadequate. A step in the right direction has however been taken in New South Wales, where, under the Prisoners' Detention Act, prisoners afflicted with certain diseases may be detained until the medical authorities pronounce them to be free from contagion. Unfortunately the Act does not apply to persons imprisoned in default of paying fines.

The general reorganisation of the New South Wales prison system may be said to date from the year 1896. Briefly stated, the chief reforms which have been introduced are as follows:—(a) Prevention of contamination consequent on evil association by the adoption of the "restricted association" scheme, under which prisoners are allowed to have as little intercourse with each other as possible, each prisoner having a separate cell, and mingling with other prisoners only at exercise or at work, and then under close supervision. (b) Careful classification of prisoners to avoid contact of minor or first offenders with the more hardened. (c) Better prison fare. (d) Abolition of solitary confinement in dark cells. (e) Lighting cells up to a reasonable hour at night and allowing well-conducted prisoners the privilege of reading interesting books. (f) Abolition of the practice of sending young children to gaol. (g) Attempt at scientific treatment of the habitual offender. (h) Special penitentiary for women prisoners under system of restricted association. (i) Provisions for helping prisoners on leaving gaol to find work through the agency of the Discharged Prisoners' Aid Society. Assistance in this direction is also given by numerous clerical and lay helpers.

In 1902 the system of finger-print identification of criminals was introduced, and by the year 1903 bureaux had been established in the various States for the exchange of records. Very successful results have attended the introduction of the system.

Space will not permit of more than a passing reference to the improvements brought about in prison management in the other States. In Victoria there is an excellent system of classification and allocation of prisoners to different gaols, while at the important penal establishment at Pentridge a careful segregation into no less than five distinct classes is carried out. In common with the other States the latest humane methods of accommodation and prison treatment have for some time been employed.

Queensland prisons have been considerably modernised during the last few years. The prison for females at Brisbane has been built on the radiating plan, and embodies the latest ideas in penological methods. Classification of prisoners has been fully carried out in the male and female divisions of Brisbane prison, and at the Stewart's Creek penal establishment. The construction of the buildings does not, however, permit of the plan being adopted in its entirety in all Queensland prisons. It is stated by the Comptroller-General of Prisons that the classification adopted has already resulted in a decrease in the total number of female prisoners received.

Unusual circumstances have combined to keep crime at a low point in South Australia. In the first place there was never any transportation of criminals to the State,

while in the earlier years of its history South Australian lawbreakers were transported elsewhere. The present system was drafted mainly on English and European lines by the late W. R. Boothby, C.M.G., and under his directions and that of his successor has been found to work admirably. Excellent work for the benefit and assistance of discharged prisoners is performed by the Prisoners' Aid Association.

There is no special information available with regard to the prison systems of Western Australia and Tasmania.

§ 5. Civil Courts.

1. **Lower Courts.**—The transactions of the lower courts on the civil side during each of the last five years are given in the table hereunder. As pointed out previously, the jurisdiction of the courts is by no means uniform in the various States. The figures, however, possess a certain value as indicating that, in comparison with other years, resort to litigation is on the decline in Australia.

LOWER COURTS.—CIVIL CASES, COMMONWEALTH, 1906 to 1910.

State.		1906.	1907.	1908.	1909.	1910.
New South Wales	{ Cases No.	20,573	26,548	30,472	32,637	30,059
	{ Amount £	*	63,350	83,372	87,432	77,700
Victoria	{ Cases No.	25,320	26,255	32,005	36,894	29,902
	{ Amount £	123,625	123,732	157,334	162,393	146,284
Queensland	{ Cases No.	10,311	10,304	12,016	12,244	11,951
	{ Amount £	36,408	35,576	42,863	43,363	45,432
South Australia	{ Cases No.	11,844	11,737	13,068	13,627	13,845
	{ Amount £	29,123	31,804	39,627	41,811	45,380
Western Australia	{ Cases No.	10,109	9,930	10,570	10,681	9,598
	{ Amount £	62,556	57,000	59,868	50,261	42,636
Tasmania	{ Cases No.	3,673	3,568	4,120	4,868	3,620
	{ Amount £	22,095	19,574	25,717	30,855	29,199
Commonwealth	{ Cases No.	81,830	88,342	102,251	110,951	98,975
	{ Amount £	†273,807	331,036	408,776	416,115	386,631

\* Not available. † Exclusive of New South Wales.

The figures just given represent the returns from Petty Sessions Courts in New South Wales and Victoria, the Petty Debts Cases in Queensland, the Local Courts of South Australia and Western Australia, and the Court of Requests in Tasmania.

2. **Superior Courts.**—In the next table will be found the transactions on the civil side in the Superior Courts during each of the years 1906 to 1910.

The New South Wales returns are to some extent defective, as the figures quoted for amount of judgments include in the case of the Common Law jurisdiction of the Supreme Court the total judgment signed, while in the case of the other States the figures refer to sums actually adjudged after trial. For New South Wales, also, the transactions of